



kids 'n' dirt

LEAF STEPPING STONES

Leaves are falling all around at this time of year. We take that as inspiration this month, along with a healthy dose of wet concrete.

WORDS & PHOTOS **ALICE BUSH**
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS **GRANT BUSH**

OUR COLOURS

- Resene Galliano
- Resene Impromptu
- Resene Red Red Red
- Resene Rose Of Sharon

You will need

- Leaves
- Mixing Bucket
- Mortar/concrete
- Old baking tins in different sizes
 - Paint brush
- Resene Concrete Primer
- Resene Testpots
 - Small chisel
- Sticky tape, double-sided is best
 - Trowel
 - Tweezers

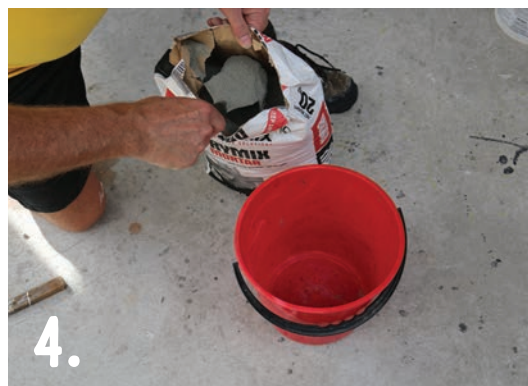
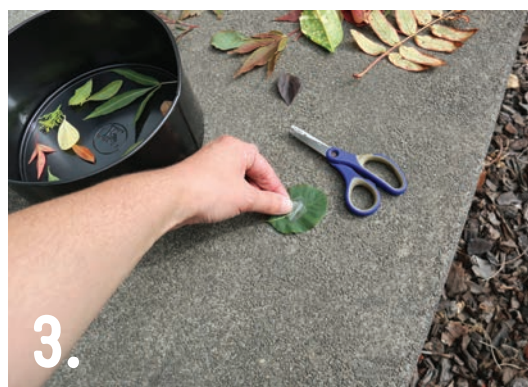
Mortar vs concrete

The difference between mortar and concrete is quite simple really: concrete will have larger gravel in it, which might make it harder for you to get a good impression. We used mortar for this project. Concrete will still work, just make sure to pick out some of the larger bits of gravel.



Another idea

Why not bring autumn inside? Downscale your mortar stones and use them to decorate your home. Try attaching a hook to the back to hang on your wall – just place a wire hoop in the back of your concrete before it sets. These smaller versions also make great coasters, or you can give them away as gifts.



Going for a walk around your garden, neighbourhood or local park can be a great opportunity to learn about the different types of trees in your area this autumn. You might just notice a few things about your surroundings you didn't before.

STEP ONE

Collect your leaves. Look for leaves that are large, fairly sturdy, and have prominent veins and texture. Our New Zealand natives are particularly good for this! It's autumn, so there will be plenty of leaves on the ground, but these may break apart in the mould and not create much of an impression. However, you might still want to use these leaves for inspiration when it comes to painting your impressions.

STEP TWO

Lay your leaves out in the bottom of your baking tins. Think of it like a leaf collage! Think about the different shapes and how they work together. You might want to lay your leaves out as if they have fallen from the tree and into the pan.

STEP THREE

Once you are happy with your arrangement, tape your leaves down with sticky tape.

STEP FOUR

Mix your concrete or mortar. For this part you might need a little bit of help. We started with putting six large trowel scoops of dry mortar into the mixing bucket, before slowly adding water. You want your mixture to be a little wetter than recommended on the packet.

STEP FIVE

Using your trowel, scoop your mortar into your baking tins. Start off by covering the leaves in mortar to help hold them down before filling in the baking tin until it is about half full. You want your stones to be about 4-5cm high.

STEP SIX

Tap on the sides of the baking tin to help your mortar settle. You can also try lifting the tin a centimetre or two off your bench and then dropping it down again. The vibrations caused by doing this will get rid of bubbles within the mortar.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.

STEP SEVEN

Leave for at least two days. Once the mortar is hard, turn your tins over and lightly tap on the bottom to encourage your freshly made stone out of its mould.

STEP EIGHT

Lift your leaves out of the mortar, hopefully leaving behind a beautiful impression! You might need the help of tweezers or a small chisel to remove some parts of the leaves; be gentle to avoid disturbing the shapes left behind.

STEP NINE

Leave your stones to dry for at least a week before painting. This will help to remove any remaining moisture. Leave them in a covered space or cover them in a tarp or plastic sheet.

STEP TEN

Cover your leaf impressions with Resene Concrete Primer, making sure to get into all the nooks and crannies your leaves may have left behind.

STEP ELEVEN

Paint your impressions using different coloured Resene Testpots. We decided to imitate the foliage we had collected, painting the stones in beautiful autumn colours! Leave the paint to dry.

Place your paving stones around your garden, in your vege patch, or use them to provide a little bit of garden decoration!



Painting tips

If you want to create larger stepping stones with just a smaller leaf impression, paint the main part of the stepping stone with Resene Non-Skid Deck & Path to give shoes and feet something to grip onto, especially when the stones are wet.

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